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BOOK REVIEWS

The religious consciousness: a psychological study. By J. B. PRATT.
New York, The Macmillan Co. 1920. pp. viii, 486.

This very substantial and comprehensive addition to the growing literature of the subject furnishes new evidence of the pre-eminence of American scholars in the psychology of religion. The reader may find here in very clear and attractive form the results of this twenty-one-year old science. The chapters arrange themselves into four groups. The first four may be considered as introductory, dealing with the definition of religion, the nature of the psychology of religion, the significance of the subconscious and the relation of society and the individual. The next five chapters cover the topics and materials presented in several books beginning with Starbuck's. The discussions treat of the religion of childhood, adolescence, conversion and revivals. Six chapters follow which contain perhaps the most original and vital pages of the entire book. The subjects are belief in God and immortality, the nature of cults, and the phenomena of worship and prayer. The last five chapters give an exposition of mysticism and a criticism and estimate of its central principles and practices. Certain problems in each of these groups of chapters will be considered in this review.

The preface emphasizes the purpose of the author to give a description of the religious consciousness in a purely objective way without the bias of any point of view. This he succeeds in doing unless it is in certain passages touching upon the work of some writers whose point of view is avowed and different. The definition of religion given is suggestive of the procedure. "Religion is the serious and social attitude of individuals or communities toward the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interests and destinies." The attractiveness of this definition lies in the use of the term "attitude" instead of belief, and in the recognition, though somewhat faint-heartedly, of the social character of religion. The difficulty which the author has with this term 'social' gives the impression that it is forced upon his attention by the drift of current thinking, but without his full consent or satisfaction. He still regards the social as in some way opposed to the individual, but the relation is not clearly set forth. For example, he would seek the origin of religion "within the subjective needs of human nature," but "the religious consciousness inevitably considers its religion objective as well as subjective." Subjective here apparently means subjective to the individual, and objective means more objective than writers like Durkheim would imply by the word social. By thinking of the social as subjective the author fails to recognize the force which the expression "social consciousness" has for those writers whose use of it he criticizes. In connection with the definition it is indicated that the "power or powers" referred to may be regarded as equivalent to the "Determiner of Destiny." The latter expression is the more frequently used. The value of this term evidently lies partly in its vagueness. It is not intended to designate exclusively a personal object of the religious attitude, although it might comprehend that with the

non-personal types. "To describe the workings of the human mind so far as these are influenced by its attitude toward the Determiner of Destiny, is the task of the psychology of religion."

The second group of chapters gives an excellent restatement of the development of religion through childhood and adolescence. The author holds with practically all present-day psychologists that there is no one religious instinct. He rejects the conception of childhood which holds that "Heaven lies about us in our infancy!" He says "*Earth* lies about us in our infancy," and the baby is a little animal. Family influence is the most potent in religious development, but all social contacts make their contribution. Adolescence is "the flowering time for religion." It is, however, full of ups and downs, of storm and stress. The individual gains in power and selfhood but at the same time experiences bewilderment and depression. The essential thing about conversion is the unification of character, the achievement of a new self. Many conversion-experiences are quoted from various religions and sects. Revivalism is criticized adversely for the most part, with an analysis of its methods of emotional, mob suggestion.

The third group of chapters introduces more new observations and discussions than any other part of the book. The two main questions raised concerning God are: why do people continue to believe in God? and what are the psychological factors that influence or determine the meaning of that term? It is observed that the idea of God is generally not very clear. A good deacon is quoted as confessing that his idea of God was "a kind of oblong blur." Sociological influences, such as the form of family and political control, have much to do with impressing the fatherly and kingly patterns upon the idea. The psychological influences are largely in the field of sense and imagination. Images, pictures, lights and sounds are conspicuous. Both sensuous and conceptual factors belong to the idea of God, though the vividness and definiteness of these factors vary greatly in individuals and in the different moods of the same person. There is found here a certain justification for the anthromorphic image of God which so many persons have struggled to eliminate. The image may be merely symbolic, but it has great power over the emotions. The imaginative and the conceptual aspects of the idea of God, as of other ideas, are not necessarily in conflict but are normally, though with varying emphasis, present and vital. The reasons why people believe in God are put under four types, authoritative, reasoned, emotional and volitional. These types are illustrated by instances received through questionnaires. Under the reasoned type appear the influences of the traditional arguments, the cosmological and the teleological. Others reason from the practical effects for good upon the lives of those who believe. The emotional type seems to be more numerous than any of the others. This includes cases of the "experience of God's presence," as among the mystics. The volitional type embraces those whose faith arises from a more or less deliberate "will to believe." The same four types of belief are cited with reference to immortality. Belief in immortality is regarded as coming earlier and as being less dependent upon instruction than belief in God. It is more a matter of feeling and will, of instinctive impulse toward self-preservation. There are, however, many people who do not care for immortality, and there seems to be a lessening desire for it through the last five hundred years because, partly at least, this world has become more attractive.

A good account is given of the cult and its function. The author's travels in India and his observation of the ceremonies of the Roman Catholic church have enabled him to appreciate the poverty and barrenness of Protestant services so far as symbolism is concerned. Accepting the genetic account of the writers who find the origin of the cult in social activities, Professor Pratt seems to fail to recognize the way in which the sense of the group may also supply the equivalent of the "Determiner of Destiny," and how such writers as Durkheim, Jane Harrison, and Cornford have shown the dependence of the cosmic upon the social consciousness. The latter point is dismissed too easily (p. 261). The use of images and idols in religious ceremonies comes out in a new light when viewed in reference to the value of these as means of enlivening religious faith and feeling. "The sensuous representation reinforces the reality-feeling. Much more may thus be said in defence of the practice of 'idolatry' than most of us have been brought up to suppose." Further, the activities of the cult have a similar value for the participant. "The feeling of these acts is a considerable part of the religious emotion." To be most potent in one's experience it must have been cultivated in childhood. An interesting comparison is made between the objective worship of the Roman Catholic church and the subjective worship of Protestantism. The Catholic church occupies itself with the worship of God. The Protestant seeks the salvation of souls. It is immaterial to the former whether a congregation is present, but Protestantism is dependent upon the presence of people. The candles of the Catholic churches are for God; the flowers of the Protestants are for the people to see. The author elaborates this contrast very convincingly. It is doubtful, however, whether he has not overstressed the subjective phase of Protestant services. Does any one "attempt to produce merely subjective religious effects?" Here an effect achieved with the group seems to be considered as much subjective as the emotional state of an individual. But it often happens that the common will of an assembly deliberating upon measures of public welfare communicates itself to the individuals as an objective, super-individual judgment. It does not seem quite exact to designate that consensus of opinion and feeling as "subjective." The author admits that "objective worship of the sort that aims to please the Deity is a thing of the past" (p. 308). His description of objective worship other than this is not quite clear. He surely does not mean that men can worship "cosmic forces." It is likely that the author has not yet spoken to his own satisfaction on this point. Having so qualified his "Determiner of Destiny" as to render it unable to take the rôle of God as commonly conceived, he does not adequately provide for the central factor in religious worship. The same problem concerning the meaning of the word subjective affects the discussion of prayer. "If it be true both that the subjective value of prayer is very great and also that it is the only value which prayer possesses, this latter fact should be assiduously kept secret."

Professor Pratt gives more space to mysticism than is found in any other general treatise on the psychology of religion. Mysticism is defined "as the sense of the presence of a being or reality through other means than the ordinary perceptive processes or the reason." Two types are distinguished, the mild and the extreme. Extensive quotations are cited to set forth their characteristics. The sense of presence is the largest factor. This is often most vivid when the mystic

is alone on the hills or in the woods. It is susceptible of cultivation; and the literature of mysticism is much occupied with the technique and discipline by which its goal is reached. Pratt recognizes the fact that many mystics are abnormal and that their quest for this great experience has brought the illusion of attaining it. Still he does not share the views of Murisier and Leuba in this respect, but holds that mysticism has positive value and adds assurance and vividness beyond ordinary religious experience. In the discussion of mysticism, as in other parts of the book, the author shows his close affinity to William James.

The style is clear and entertaining. The use of first-hand material secured by questionnaires adds concreteness and vividness, but there can be little scientific value in trying to employ the method of percentages on 170 replies concerning prayer or belief in God! The abundant references and extensive footnotes open into attractive elaborations of the discussions in the text. While scarcely prepared in the manner of a text-book, the book will undoubtedly be used for that purpose and as collateral reading. For the general reader and for the teacher and preacher of religion it affords one of the most adequate treatments of the subject to be had. It is critical and discriminating, but it is also decidedly friendly and constructive.

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Das jüdische Volk und seine Jugend. By S. BERNFELD. Wien, R. Löwit Verlag, 1920. 149 pp.

The first half of this book is devoted to a negative criticism of the aims and results of European education. Since the child is looked upon as an adult 'in the rough,' whom it is the function of the educational process to polish into adulthood, the results of European education are bound to be an unnatural forcing of the child's development and the destruction of the cultural possibilities inherent in youth.

The second half of the book gives a vivid presentation of a system of education to prevail half a century hence in Palestine, which is conceived as possessing by that time the seat of a Jewish commonwealth. The national constitution provides for the complete support and control by the state of the entire youth of the country from birth to the age of twenty. The young people are concentrated in settlements in different parts of the country, under the guidance of a psychologically and medically trained corps of educators, whose office is merely to observe the development of their charges and to be ready to aid them in their spontaneous efforts to acquire any particular discipline or skill. Within these communities the great thinkers and artists of the country, pursuing their work in a congenial atmosphere and drawing interested groups around them, create centers for cultural growth.

This Utopia can only be realized in a country whose productivity, necessarily high, accrues not to the individual but to the state, and among a people who appreciate youth for its own sake,—therefore in a Jewish Palestine.

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